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ABSTRACT

Actions which chief state school officers can take to promote the improvement of K-12 public education are presented in this brochure. The brochure is one of a series which offers specific ways in which different interest groups can respond to the eight broad action recommendations proposed by the Education Commission of the States' Task Force on Education for Economic Growth in their report, "Action for Excellence." The following areas are covered by the recommendations: (1) educational improvement plans; (2) partnerships between states and communities; (3) educational resources; (4) teacher improvement and recognition; (5) the student's academic experiences; (6) educational quality assurance; (7) educational leadership and management; and (8) services to students who are unserved or underserved. (DC)

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ACTIONS
FOR
CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS

Task Force on Education for Economic Growth

Education Commission of the States

EA015942

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WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

The challenge facing leaders in every state of the union is to inspire a new generation of citizens to be even more productive and imaginative than the generations who made "American know-how" a standard of excellence around the world. Beyond inspiring them, leaders must **empower** them by providing an education system that fosters the necessary skills, imagination and commitment.

Unfortunately, report after report indicates that we have for too long ignored the obvious connection between a well educated work force and a productive, expanding economy. In addition, technological changes over the last two decades are outpacing the schools' capacity to address change. Skills we asked the schools to stress a few short years ago seem inadequate today. And as the demand for highly trained people has risen, the achievement of students — especially in high-demand skills such as analysis or problem-solving — has been declining.

Americans have every right to be proud of an education system like no other in its commitment to serve *all* citizens, not just a privileged few. Today many exemplary schools, colleges and universities are graduating students who are as well prepared as any in the world to face the challenges of the future. But our schools must be strengthened, if they are to do what they alone can do: bring about an American renaissance.

We are challenged to act now, each in our own way, to:

- Establish clear, compelling and widely agreed upon goals and priorities for improving education
- Upgrade our expectations for children and the skills required to meet those expectations
- Collaborate as never before — educators, governors, legislators, business and labor leaders and citizens — to strengthen the schools
- Educate *all* students in the skills essential to economic productivity and to the high quality of life a strong, growing economy can provide.

WHAT IS THE RESPONSE?

In December 1982, the Education Commission of the States established a national Task Force on Education for Economic Growth under the leadership of Governor James B. Hunt, Jr. Forty-one distinguished national leaders set these goals for the Task Force:

- Create national understanding of the need for a well educated work force and of the changing skills essential to economic growth
- Promote policies, programs and actions that national, state and local leaders can use to improve education
- Establish partnerships among leaders in communities, business, labor, government and education to improve education in ways that lead to economic growth and a higher quality of life for all Americans.

The Task Force has published *Action for Excellence*, a report on the condition of education today and a series of recommendations for leaders throughout the country. The Task Force's eight major recommendations appear below. Following each are some steps leaders can take to reaffirm a national commitment to our children and our economy.

WHAT ACTIONS CAN CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS TAKE?

As chief state school officers work to improve education, they may already be taking many of the actions described here. Other actions may be new to some chiefs, though, and well worth tailoring to individual state needs.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 1

Develop — and put into effect as promptly as possible — plans for improving education in the public schools from kindergarten through grade 12.

- Support efforts to create a state Task Force on Education for Economic Growth or to put education for a productive economy on the agenda of task forces already under way.
- Promote broad understanding of how work skills are changing and how education contributes to a growing economy.
- Develop a comprehensive action plan to improve education by working with state legislators, state boards, educators, business leaders and citizens. The plan should:
 - Examine the needs of public education
 - Set state education goals that link education and economic growth
 - Specify the skills needed for employment and citizenship
 - Specify how technology can contribute to education
 - Coordinate school improvement programs
 - Identify methods to measure progress.
- Communicate education plans and progress throughout the state by:
 - Meeting with citizens' groups and the media
 - Developing brochures that outline goals and list actions groups can take to support schools
 - Supporting state education policy seminars (SEPS) and other opportunities for state leaders to consider education issues
 - Strengthening communications with local districts and schools.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 2

Create broader and more effective partnerships for improving education in the states and communities of the nation.

- Endorse collaboration among educators, government, business and industry, and the public throughout the state and within local communities.
- Encourage business and industry to share staff, lend personnel, provide training for teachers and otherwise cooperate with the schools.
- Strengthen formal and informal contacts with education associations and with parent and citizen groups

- Work with governors, legislators and leaders in higher education from other states to create regional programs to, for example, train teachers or develop the skills of academically gifted students.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 3

Marshal the resources that are essential for improving the public schools.

- Work with state legislators to assure adequate budgets for strong state agency programs, particularly programs for research, technical assistance, inservice training and evaluation.
- Spearhead efforts to secure specialized equipment and facilities for schools.
- Fund curriculum development in areas that can increase students' ability to participate in the work force — science, mathematics, computer literacy, economics, career development, foreign languages and global education.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 4

Express a new and higher regard for teachers and for the profession of teaching.

- Work with the state legislature, institutions of higher education and private funding sources to provide scholarships and loans for highly qualified prospective teachers.
- Establish programs to reward teachers who demonstrate outstanding instructional leadership.
- Identify examples of excellence and progress in education.
- Develop programs to expand career opportunities within teaching.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 5

Make the academic experience more intense and more productive.

- Encourage school districts to restructure the school year or school day so students spend more time on learning.
- Establish a committee, in cooperation with the state board or state education agency, to study curriculum content and sequence.
- Support schools in helping students set high goals.

- Encourage school districts to enlist parents' support in establishing explicit and demanding requirements for discipline, attendance and homework.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 6

Provide quality assurance in education.

- Work with boards of education, higher education, teachers and administrators to develop systems for measuring the effectiveness of teachers and administrators.
- Improve the process by which teachers and administrators are certified, and modify certification requirements so people with special expertise can serve in the schools.
- Examine the procedures for selecting and retaining teachers.
- Cooperate with professional organizations, training institutions and training staff to provide high-quality, sequential programs of inservice training for teachers and administrators.
- Move to raise requirements for high school graduation and college admission.
- Monitor student progress through periodic testing of general achievement and specific skills; report results regularly to students and parents.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 7

Improve leadership and management in the schools.

- Work with deans of institutions that train administrators to improve training in effective management techniques.
- Help state boards and local districts to promote programs that:
 - Enable principals to devote most of their attention to improving classroom instruction
 - Raise standards for recruiting, training and evaluating the performance of principals
 - Establish state or regional institutes to help principals improve leadership skills
 - Relate principals' salaries to their effectiveness
 - Give principals authority commensurate with their responsibilities
 - Reward principals and faculty for extraordinary leadership
 - Ensure that principals are assigned to no more than one school.

ACTION RECOMMENDATION 8

Serve better those students who are now unserved or underserved.

- Challenge academically gifted students.
- Develop or support programs to attract more women, minority and handicapped students into courses where they are now underrepresented.
- Support the broad, equitable distribution of educational resources so that no child is denied the possibility of becoming a productive member of society.

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

The Task Force will continue to be active, promoting efforts to improve K-12 education and developing products that chief state school officers and other concerned groups can use to improve education for economic growth. For more information contact:

Education Commission of the States

Suite 300
1860 Lincoln Street
Denver, CO 80295
(303) 830-3800

and

Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)

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Although the Task Force recommendations are generally consistent with CCSSO policy, CCSSO has not formally endorsed them.

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